

Activity
D

Have students analyse the painting and complete the list. They may find some of the cues from the glossary helpful.

Read the text and complete the list.

Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*
(Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels)

During the French Revolution, David played an active role, being in charge of the artistic matters of the nation for some time.

In 1793 he painted *The Death of Marat*, a political leader of the Revolution who had been murdered by monarchic Charlotte Corday in his bathtub.

Marat suffered from a painful skin disease and was forced to work immersed in water writing on a wooden board as his desk.

The artist has organized the scene with extreme directness and essentiality, thereby enhancing the awe-inspiring atmosphere he meant to convey.

The painting, in fact, is intended as a public homage to a martyr of the people, a virtuous hero who strived to defend the rights of the less fortunate. This accounts for the inspiration to classical art as well as to devotional examples merged with the starkness of the historical fact, since the presence of detailed elements, which could refer too directly to the real setting of the event, may have turned Marat's murder into that of an ordinary man.

The viewer's attention is immediately directed to the hand holding Corday's entreaty whose words sound as the cruel treason of a generous man unable to defend. It is not by chance, then, that David's main reference for his figure is that of the deposed Christ as represented in Raphael's *Baglioni Altarpiece* and in Caravaggio's *Entombement*.



Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*, 1793, detail. Oil on canvas, 165x128 cm. Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

WORKS

- type of subject
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- technique
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- use of colours
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- composition
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- figures
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- iconological message
-

Activity
E

At this point students should be able to compose a short analysis of one of Canova's works. Below is a writing frame that students may find useful.

Read the text and complete the analysis of Canova's *Theseus and the Minotaur* using your own words.

Canova's statues

TECHNIQUES



Antonio Canova, *Theseus and the Minotaur*, 1781-1783. Marble, height 145 cm. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

One of the Italian artists to achieve an extraordinary reputation in Europe was undoubtedly Antonio Canova. To the eyes of his contemporaries the Venetian sculptor reunited the foremost neoclassical ideals as theorized by their most prominent champions: the emphasis placed on clarity of outlines, severity of expression, emotional restraint and sublimated purity. Such concepts are reflected in his *Hercules and Licas* whose execution started in 1795. The work illustrates a mythological subject, but the artist decided to focus on the instant preceding the violent action. A torrent of savage energy is on the verge of exploding from Hercules' strained pose but, despite Lica's desperate face, there's no room for emotional excesses.

In *Theseus and the Minotaur*, dated 1781-82, is among his most appreciated work in Rome, Canova sought to express the idealized calm of victory that prevails at the end of the struggle.

The Italian sculptor's reputation was finally established with the execution of such works as *Paolina Bonaparte as Venus Victrix* (1805-8) and *Amor and Psyche*.

Napoleon's sister, in this case a real woman, is transfigured into the most desirable of goddesses. She is reclined on a *triclinium* holding the golden apple she won at the beauty contest after defeating Juno and Athena. The highly polished marble, a prerogative of Canova's technique, evokes the sensuous softness of a woman's flesh, which originally was lavishly offered to the admiration of the viewer since the statue hid a mechanical device that provoked its complete rotation.

- This work was executed in and had been commissioned by
- It portrays
- Canova's primary focus in this work was
- In the work great attention is shown in the study of
- The composition is inspired by
- The composition appears symmetrical/asymmetrical thanks to/because of the.....
- The pose of suggests
- The relationship of the figures to each other is established
- Symbols/attributes have been introduced which indicate
- The idea of motion is expressed in static terms by
- The artist has exploited the qualities of to create
- The artists has achieved this effect by.....